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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 DODE-00 ACDA-07 IO-13 SAJ-01 PRS-01 /068 W
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R 191800Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8912
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION NATO
ALL EC CAPITALS 0302
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, FR, UR, CSCE, GE, BW, GW
SUBJ: MORE ON FRENCH-SOVIET RELATIONS AND BELGRADE

REF: PARIS 35241

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: SENIOR FRENCH OFFICIALS PERCEIVE BREZHNEV'S VISIT THIS YEAR IN SOBER LIGHT--EXCEPT FOR EXCELLENT PROGRESS IN FRANCO-SOVIET ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP--AND CITE REASON FOR "DEPOLITICIZATION" OF FRENCH-SOVIET SUMMITS. MAIN FRENCH GESTURES TOWARDS SOVIETS MAY RELATE TO BELGRADE REVIEW CONFERENCE, WHERE FRENCH MAY OFFER TO PLAY DISCREET "MODERATING ROLE" TO ASSURE BELGRADE DOES NOT BECOME WARSAW PACT "TRIAL" INJURIOUS TO DETENTE. HOWEVER, GOF IS KEENLY AWARE
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THAT FURTHER REPRESSION OF DISSIDENTS OR DEEPENING OF CURRENT BERLIN PROBLEMS COULD PLACE BOTH BREZHNEV'S VISIT AND BELGRADE, IN VERY AWKWARD LIGHT. END SUMMARY.

2. BOTH ELYSEE INTERNATIONAL STAFF AND QUAI DIRECTOR FOR EUROPE ANDREANI HAVE IN LAST WEEK SPOKEN TO US WITH UNCOMMON CLARITY ABOUT VARIOUS FACETS FRENCH-SOVIET

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RELATIONS.

3. GIST OF MESSAGE IS THAT FRENCH INTEND APPROACH BREZHNEV VISIT TO FRANCE IN JUNE OR JULY--THE EXACT DATE IS STILL UNFIXED--WITH SOBRIETY AND REALISM. ANDREANI SAID TIME IS NOW FINALLY GONE WHEN FRENCH-SOVIET CONTACTS COULD OR SHOULD BE GIVEN SPECIAL AURA. WHEN DE GAULLE UNDERTOOK HIS FAMOUS TRIP TO MOSCOW IN 1966, FRANCE FELT A PROFOUND POPULAR NEED TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH USSR. SINCE THEN, AS A RESULT OF "PRAGUE," SOLZHENITSYN, ETC., THE USSR HAS "LOST ENORMOUSLY" IN ITS PUBLIC APPEAL IN FRANCE. THIS PRO-CESS OF DISENCHANTMENT HAS ACCELERATED IN THE LAST YEAR WHEN SOVIET AND EE FAILURES IN FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE SUCCEEDED THEMSELVES WITH SUCH RAPIDITY THAT FRENCH PRESS HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY SATURATED WITH THEM--UNDER HEADINGS SUCH AS PLIOUTCH, ROSTROPOVICH "L'AVEU," BOUKOVSKY, AND NOW THE PRAGUE 77. IT HAS AT SAME TIME BEEN FURTHER REINFORCED BY THE INCREASINGLY ACRIMONIOUS ARGUMENT BETWEEN THE PCF AND THE USSR OVER THE SAME HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. THIS ARGUMENT HAS NOT ONLY DRAWN EVEN FURTHER ATTENTION TO THESE UNFLATTERING ASPECTS OF SOVIET BEHAVIOR, BUT, MORE IMPORTANTLY FOR FRENCH POLICY, HAS DECREASED THE NEED FOR MAGNIFYING FRENCH RELATIONS WITH THE USSR--SINCE THIS IS NOW NO LONGER NECESSARY TO EMBARRASS THE PCF.

4. AS RESULT, ANDREANI SAYS, MANY, ALTHOUGH STILL NOT ALL AT QUAI AND ELYSEE, HAVE FINALLY REACHED CONCLU-

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SION THAT TIME HAS COME TO "DEPOLITICIZE" THE ANNUAL FRENCH-SOVIET SUMMIT CONTACTS, SINCE, UNDER CIRCUM-STANCES JUST DESCRIBED, THEY NO LONGER REPRESENT UNAMBIGUOUS PUBLIC ASSET FOR PRESIDENT OF FRANCE. TO BE SURE, FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE ARE SINCERELY ANXIOUS TO CONTINUE TO DEEPEN DETENTE, AND WITH THERE-FORE CONTINUE TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT EFFORT TO HAVE "GOOD" RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW. HOWEVER, AS THE ALMOST UNREMARKED FAILURE OF A FRENCH-SOVIET SUMMIT TO MATERIALIZE IN 1976 HAS SHOWN, THERE IS SIMPLY NO LONGER A PUBLIC DEMAND FOR DRAMATIZING, OR PAYING A HIGH PRICE FOR IMPROVING ATMOSPHERE. ANDREANI WAS QUICK TO ADD THAT GOF DOES ATTACH CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE TO FRENCH-SOVIET ECONOMIC RELATIONS, WHICH ARE RAPIDLY GROWING IN VOLUME AND ARE CURRENTLY DOING VERY WELL. TO ILLUSTRATE DISTINCTION OF CURRENT FRENCH ATTITUDES, ANDREANI CITED THE MODEST, NOTICEABLY LOW-KEYED APPROACH TO POLITICAL ASPECTS IN GISCARD'S

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JANUARY 13 MEETING WITH KIRILIN AT INAUGURATION OF
HUGE NEW SOVIET-MADE METAL PRESS (SEPTEL); AS DIS-
TINGUISHED FROM EMPHASIS GISCARD PLACED ON ECONOMIC
ASPECTS. WHILE THIS AFFAIR LENT ITSELF TO THIS
APPROACH, ANDREANI SAID, DIFFERENCE WAS NOT ACCIDENTAL.

5. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, BOTH ELYSEE AND ANDREANI
INDICATE THAT, AS OF NOW AT LEAST, FRENCH INTEND TO
OFFER BREZHNEV NO SPECIALLY STARTLING CONCESSIONS FOR
COMING HERE NEXT SUMMER. BOTH EMPHASIZE BLUNTLY
FRENCH WOULD NOT PERMIT SOVIETS TO WHITTLE INTO THEIR
REAL MILITARY OR POLITICAL STRENTH. THUS ANDREANI
AGAIN REAFFIRMED THAT NO SIGNIFICANT DISARMAMENT CON-
CESSIONS ARE IN CARDS--WHICH, EMBASSY NOTES, SHOULD
NOT BE READ TO MEAN THAT SOME MODEST AGREEMENTS IN
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THIS FIELD MIGHT NOT EMERGE; INVOLVING, FOR INSTANCE, SOME GREATER FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN CERTAIN DISARMAMENT FORA AS SOVIETS DESIRE.

6. SIMILARLY, ANDREANI SAYS, BREZHNEV IS NOT LIKELY TO GET HIS THREE CONFERENCES FROM GISCARD; ALTHOUGH AGAIN, HE DID NOT ABSOLUTELY EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT FRENCH MIGHT, IN END, BE WILLING TO ENDORSE, FOR EXAMPLE, A PAN-EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL MEETING ON GROUNDS THAT SUCH EXPERT GATHERING WAS HARMLESS.

7. PRINCIPAL "CONCESSION" ANDREANI, ELYSEE AND SOME OTHERS WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS WITH, NOW SEEM TO EXPECT GISCARD TO MAKE, IS TO ASSURE BREZHNEV THAT FRANCE WOULD MAKE "CONCRETE EFFORT" TO PREVENT CSCE BELGRADE REVIEW CONFERENCE FROM BECOMING AN "INQUISITION" OF SOVIET DOMESTIC CONDUCT. THIS WOULD MEAN DELIBERATE "MODERATING" ROLE (PUTTING FRANCE AT CONSERVATIVE END OF ALLIANCE SPECTRUM ON THIS ISSUE), WHICH, ANDREANI ADMITTED, FRENCH HAD ALREADY PLAYED WITH SOME SUCCESS AT CRITICAL POINTS IN CSCE NEGOTIATIONS AT GENEVA. ASKED WHETHER THIS WOULD PROVE ENOUGH TO SATISFY THE SOVIETS, ANDREANI SAID "PROBABLY NOT, BUT THAT IS ALL FRENCH COULD DO AS THINGS NOW STAND."

8. AT SAME TIME, OUR SEVERAL INTERLOCUTORS AGREE THAT SUCH A FRENCH POSTURE AT BELGRADE, COULD VERY EASILY GET CAUGHT UP IN FURTHER ESCALATION OF SOVIET AND EE REPRESSION OF DISSIDENTS; OR BE VITIATED IF, FOR EXAMPLE, RECENT GDR ACTIONS ARE NOT THE END BUT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW SALAMI OPERATION IN BERLIN. SINCE THIS IS VERY UNPLEASANT PROSPECT, BOTH ANDREANI AND QUAI GERMAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR PLAISANT, ARE CURRENTLY AGAIN DOWNPLAYING GDR PINPRICKS AS MINOR ISSUES "WHICH WEST SHOULD NOT DRAMATIZE." ON OTHER HAND, THEY RECOGNIZE THAT INCREASING REPRESSIVE ACTIONS IN USSR AND EE

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COUNTRIES RESULTING FROM INTERNAL DEMANDS FOR GREATER LIBERALIZATION BEFORE BELGRADE CONFERENCE, COULD STILL EASILY PRECIPITATE SERIOUS SITUATION, INCLUDING POSSIBILITY THAT RENEWED FURTHER TIGHTENING UP ON BERLIN MIGHT BE USED TO TRY TO DISTRACT ATTENTION AND SHIFT BLAME. IF SO, ANDREANI ADMITS BREZHNEV VISIT AND BELGRADE COULD TAKE PLACE UNDER VERY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES INDEED.

9. PART OF THIS COMPLEX EQUATION OF THE COMING MONTHS,

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AS PERCEIVED IN PARIS, OF COURSE, ALSO INVOLVES GERMANY
AND MBFR. ANDREANI AND PLAISANT BOTH, IN DIFFERENT BUT

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RELATED WAYS, EXPRESSED THEIR ANXIETY ABOUT FACT THAT,
UNLIKE FRANCE, WHICH WAS BECOMING MORE AND MORE
DISENTHRALLED ABOUT ITS RELATIONS WITH THE USSR--EXCEPT
IN ECONOMIC FIELD--THE FRG SEEMED TO HAVE REACHED
"LIMITS OF ITS DISAFFECTION" AND SEEMED TO BE BOUNDING
BACK: LIMITS, PLAISANT EXPLAINED, SET BY FACT THAT
SCHMIDT SIMPLY CANNOT LET OST-POLITIK DETERIORATE
BEYOND A CERTAIN POINT. IT IS IN THIS LIGHT THAT
PLAISANT EXPLAINS SCHMIDT'S RECENT CALL FOR A POLITICAL
BREAKTHROUGH ON MBFR THIS YEAR, A NEGOTIATION "FRENCH
FEAR IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE LIKELIHOOD OF ITS
SUCCESS." THESE AND OTHER DIFFERENCES IN NUANCES
OF GERMAN AND FRENCH APPROACHES TO EAST-WEST RELATIONS
THEREFORE FURTHER COMPLICATE PROBLEM.

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10. IN SUM, WHETHER IT IS MATTER OF SOUR GRAPES OR GENUINE CONVICTION, FRENCH OFFICIALS NOW SEEM TO PRESENT MORE CONSERVATIVE AND CAUTIOUS FRONT ON EAST-WEST MATTERS THAN THEY HAVE FOR CONSIDERABLE TIME. IN ALL THIS THE CENTRAL ISSUE FOR FRANCE (AS TO OTHERS IN THE WEST) IS THE UNCERTAINTY WHETHER FURTHER INTERNAL REPRESSION IN EAST, OVERLY BLATANT SOVIET DISARMAMENT DEMANDS, BUT PARTICULARLY RESURGENT PROBLEMS IN BERLIN COULD NOT, BY SUMMER, PLACE BREZHNEV VISIT AND BELGRADE IN EVEN MORE AWKWARD LIGHT. FOR PRESENT, FRENCH ARE PROCEEDING ON ABOVE-OUTLINED SOBER COURSE.

11. COMMENT: WE WILL ATTEMPT COMMENT ON FRENCH CSCE THINKING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN SEPTELS.
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Message Attributes

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Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, MINISTERIAL VISITS
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
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Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3558551
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MORE ON FRENCH-SOVIET RELATIONS AND BELGRADE
TAGS: PFOR, FR, UR, GC, BW, GE, CSCE, (BREZHNEV, LEONID I)
To: STATE
Type: TE
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Review Markings:
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Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009